

AROUND THE CORPS IN BRIEF

1/3 practices raids with night vision

**KAHUKU TRAINING AREA, Hawaii** — Equipped with night vision goggles, weapons and their basic knowledge in the art of combat, Marines from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, conducted a week of special operations training involving night helicopter raids, recently.

Thirty-four Marines from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, integrated into Charlie Co., 1/3, in preparation for deployment to Okinawa, Japan, where they will be part of the ground combat element for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, explained 2nd Lt. Travis J. Fuller, 3rd Platoon commander, Charlie Co., 1/3.

For one week, the Marines participated in exercises at the Kahuku Training Area and Marine Corps Training Area Bellows. Throughout the week's evolution, they conducted a daytime helicopter raid and three night helicopter raids.

The instruction Charlie Co. received during the week is part of the MEU Pre-deployment Training Program, which brought instructors from Special Operations Training Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force based in Okinawa, Japan, to train and critique Marines during the evolution.

After a day of field maneuvers, the Marines of Charlie Co. were anticipating their next move, attaching night vision goggles to their Kevlars and mentally preparing themselves.

As the sun set, three CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 363 picked up five groups of Marines from the Kahukus (in the combat scenario, Kahuku was a ship) and delivered them in two trips to Bellows. Once they all arrived, they streamed from each helicopter and headed toward their objective in a quick, yet continuous, stealth-like manner.

Once the objective was taken and everyone was accounted for, Marines and sailors quickly returned to the helicopters carrying the injured. The Sea Stallions returned to Kahuku.

Fighters battle it out in boxing ring

**MCB HAWAII, Kaneohe Bay** – The Kahuna's Community Ballroom became standing room only for USA Boxing Hawaii's "Boxing on the Bay" April 23. Marine Corps Base Hawaii's Fighters Unlimited, a boxing club made up of both veteran and novice fighters all stationed here, hosted the event.

Led by former Golden Gloves competitor Jack Johnson, the Marines of Fighters Unlimited were looking to make a good showing among the nine other boxing clubs who squared off in 16 fights.

Boxing for the Marine team, in front of more than 400 local and base fans, were Matthew Strickland, Kyle Stoney, Richard Ramirez and Thomas Jensen.

Strickland started the evening with a tough loss to Adrial Tam of the Kaneohe Boxing Club in the 178-pound weight class.


Stoney also lost his match up versus tough competition from the East Oahu Waimanalo Boxing Club.

Fighters Unlimited boxers Ramirez and Jensen were featured in the evening's last two main events against the Palolo Boxing Club's top fighters. Ramirez's fight was called, but Jensen lost on a decision after a tough and evenly matched fight.

The crowd was definitely pleased with the fights, and with the arrangements.

"We hope these events introduce Kahuna's ballroom opportunities to the communi-

*Now hold still ...*



**SUROBI, Afghanistan** – Seaman Luis Fonseca, a corpsman with 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, vaccinates an Afghan local during the first of a three-day Civil Military Assistance medical operation conducted in the Surobi area. During the operation, coalition medical personnel traveled to local villages vaccinating, de-worming and providing medical care to hundreds of Afghans.

ty," said Teddy Wells, assistant manager of the Enlisted Club. "These events are open to all ranks and members of the community, and we just keep trying to get the word out."

Marines use AAVs in water exercise

**MARINE CORPS TRAINING AREA BELLOW, Hawaii** — Amphibious assault vehicles manned by Lava Dogs from Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, splashed into the waters here, April 22, as part of a training package in preparation for their deployment with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

During the exercise, the Marines in the AAVs simulated an exit from the well deck of a ship. They demonstrated they could exit the vessel in a timely manner — no matter that the AAVs were charging through rough waters.

The Alpha Co. Marines kept their weapons inverted and their helmets atop bobbing heads, despite what came their way. The troop commander, the senior Marine who was in charge of the deployment, maintained control of the entire unit.

With AAVs holding just the number of Marines to execute specific missions, the Lava Dogs prepared for the amphibious landing on nearby beaches.

"Being in the AAVs can get someone very claustrophobic because there are no windows inside," said Sgt. Victor O'Neal, AAV section leader for Combat Assault Company. "The diesel fuel can get someone nauseous, and the Marines need to be able to handle those situations to react and perform the way they need to when arriving on the beach."

Once out in the water a good distance, the AAVs turned around and came onto shore. This entry gave the Lava Dogs the opportunity to experience firsthand what they might encounter during real-world missions with the 31st MEU.

"For a lot of us, it's the first time being able to experience something like this," said Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith Fichter, a machinegun team leader for Weapons Platoon, Alpha Company. "So many of the Marines here are new to the fleet, but everyone seems to be catching on really fast."

EOD team controls threat

**CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti** — A drill designed to better prepare the camp for a bomb threat tested the abilities of the force protection Marines and incorporated nearby French explosive ordnance disposal specialists here April 28.

The exercise also gave the U.S. EOD team a chance to see how they could better aid in a situation like this.

A normal day on post could quickly turn into a life or death situation for the force protection Marines assigned to U.S. Marine Forces Central Command-Djibouti in a scenario like the one the exercise presented.

The Marines were standing their post at the entry control point when one of their own, Sgt. Frederick B. Keen, pulled up to the gate fitted with a mock improvised explosive device.

During the scenario, a group of terrorists attacked Keen, held him at gunpoint and strapped the bomb to his chest. He was then told to return to his headquarters.

The attackers told the Marine if he tried to remove the harness it would detonate.

Explosive ordnance disposal specialists, who recently arrived and are currently here supporting Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, designed the simulated explosives and served as observers for the exercise.

When Keen arrived at the gate, Cpl. Isaac E. Alexander, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the post, took control of the situation. He had his Marines take cover, isolated the explosive-laden Marine and began taking the necessary steps to neutralize the situation.

The Assistant Operations Officer for MARCENT-Djibouti, Capt. Adam M. King, said this is the first EOD emergency exercise the camp has conducted that incorporates all of the key players.

1st FSSG brings supplies to Fallujah

**CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq** — Supporting efforts to quickly employ Iraqis in helping coalition forces stabilize Fallujah, Marines of the 1st Force Service Support Group brought weapons and gear to the city to outfit a newly created Iraqi army battalion Saturday.

The 1st Battalion of the Fallujah Brigade is being established in hopes that it will be a concrete step toward a peaceful resolution in the volatile city.

When it has been fully manned, the battalion will be comprised of up to 1,100 Iraqi army volunteers recruited by their former commanders.

The formation of the battalion, which will function under the direct command of I MEF, continues the process of transferring responsibility for security and stability of Iraq to the Iraqi people, said Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy director for coalition operations.

The unit assumed control of four checkpoints April 30 and has started patrolling Fallujah, he said.

Yet, until the Iraqi battalion demonstrates a capacity to effectively man designated

checkpoints and positions, Marines will continue to maintain a strong presence in and around Fallujah, said Kimmitt during a press briefing April 30.

"We have assigned the Iraqi battalion to our least-engaged sector until they can get their feet on deck, absorb the weapons and equipment we are passing their way and prepare for the next phase of the operation," said Lt. Gen. James T. Conway, the I Marine Expeditionary Force commander.

The supplies came in two waves, one containing 13 boxes of AK-47s, which left for Fallujah early in the morning, and another made up of 20 crates of uniforms, boots and miscellaneous combat gear, which left later in the evening.

These shipments are only expected to satisfy the battalion's initial needs.

Marines receive free phone cards

**WASHINGTON** — The Defense Department has granted approval for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service to sell prepaid phone cards to the general public for donation to Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom service members.

By law, only patrons with military exchange privileges can shop at AAFES retail stores, but officials announced this week that the exchange service would begin selling phone cards to normally ineligible people and organizations on its Web site.

Those wishing to purchase the cards can log on to the site and click on the "Help Our Troops Call Home" icon. The cards can be designated for an individual service member, or sent to "any service member" and distributed by the American Red Cross.

Army Maj. Gen. Kathryn Frost, AAFES commander, said phone cards also can be donated to the Air Force Aid Society and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, as well as the Fisher House. All are nonprofit charitable organizations that support service members and their families in need.

The AAFES price for phone calls is about 8 cents per minute cheaper than its closest competitor, according to Frost. And since Saturday, she said, the price per minute when calling from Iraq and Afghanistan was reduced from 32 cents per minute to 25 cents per minute when using the 550-unit prepaid card.

The general emphasized that the special 25-cent rate applies only to 550-unit prepaid cards purchased from AAFES post or base exchanges and other contingency operation stores operating in the theater of operations, she said.

AAFES also is allowing non-

mally ineligible patrons and organizations to purchase gift certificates for deployed service members through its "Gifts from the Homefront" program, Frost said. The certificates are sold by a commercial vendor through the AAFES Web site or by calling (877) 770-4438, toll-free. She said the certificates can be sent to service members overseas and used for purchases at AAFES facilities.

Iraq commanders receive armor

**WASHINGTON** — Commanders on the ground in Iraq are getting all the armored protection they determine necessary to do the job, the operations chief for U.S. Central Command told Pentagon reporters April 30.

Major Gen. John F. Sattler, speaking via teleconference from U.S. Central Command's forward headquarters in Qatar, said ground commanders' requests for additional M1A1 tanks, "up-armored" humvees and kits to up-armor vehicles already in the theater are being filled quickly and completely.

The requests came from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force operating in western Iraq and the 1st Infantry Division in north-central Iraq.

The last of 28 additional M1A1 tanks requested in Iraq are expected to arrive within the next three days, Sattler said.

Based on the current security situation, Sattler said commanders on the ground also increased their initial request for 1,000 up-armored humvees to 2,500.

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense Larry DiRita said the Pentagon has "significantly surged production" to provide commanders in Iraq the additional 2,000 up-armored humvees they have requested. By December, Sattler said, the U.S. military will have 4,500 up-armored humvees in Iraq.

Commanders in Iraq also requested 8,000 up-armor kits to reinforce "soft-skin" humvees, he said. Up-armored humvees are used in higher-threat areas, primarily to conduct patrols and provide convoy security.

Vehicles that travel exclusively on military compounds and other low-threat areas do not require the additional armored protection, Sattler said.

Marines conduct CQB training

**MCB HAWAII, Kaneohe Bay** — Fifty Marines from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, were hand selected by the battalion to participate in a two-week training course that could land them a position in the Maritime Special Purpose Force security

platoon, or even as a trailer for the DRP's upcoming deployment with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

According to Gunnery Sgt. Irvin N. Howard, a close quarters battle instructor with III Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, Japan, battalions look for seasoned or semi-senior platoons containing Marines with initiative who are able to quickly grasp unique tactical skills when choosing Marines needed for the type of combat the 31st MEU could encounter.

Special Operations Training Group Marines from Okinawa, Japan, have been instructing 1/3 Marines in preparation for the MEU assignment. The SOTG instructors train and critique the Lava Dogs in everything from their weapons retention to their close combat tactics. The close quarters battle training is designed to prepare the infantry Marines for close combat operations in a wartime environment.

According to Sgt. Michael V. Perella, another CQB instructor, SOTG, III MEF, the first week of close quarter battle training involves applying learned techniques. The SOTG instructors throw new techniques at the infantry Marines at an incredibly fast pace.

Ever since April 19, the Bravo Company Marines have been honing CQB techniques, shooting 136,000 rounds in one particular week, according to Howard.

They ran through close combat drills each day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., he explained, then engaged targets between 40 and 50 times in one day. They split into two relays of 25 Marines each, and rotated between firing and staying hydrated under a tent set up for them at the Range Training Facility aboard Kaneohe Bay.

They focused on shooting on the move and on engaging multiple targets — areas that they may not receive a lot of training with on a regular basis, said Perella.

MWSS-171 returns home

**MCAS IWAKUNI, Japan** - Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 returned April 6 after supporting Marine Aircraft Group 12 and Marine Air Control Group 18 in training exercises for more than a month in Yechon, Korea.

Nearly 200 service members deployed March 4 to Yechon where the squadron began work on the base camp. Within a week, the Marines prepared everything necessary for the sustainment of more than 600 service members.

After setting up tents, utilities and communication equipment for five different sites, the squadron began training exercises with the Korean Air Force.

"One of our goals was to learn how to effectively link the 16th Fighter Wing's ground operations center to our base defense operations center in order to develop a common operational picture," said Maj. Sean C. Killeen, MWSS-171 operations officer. For 10 days, the squadron practiced reactionary force drills alongside the Korean Air Force with armored humvees and fire teams.

"MWSS-171 not only supports the flying units," said Gunnery Sgt. Kenneth Tensley, MWSS-171 first sergeant. "We're able to set up a perimeter and provide rear security. Every Marine in '171 has to be able and capable of protecting themselves. Someone has to provide rear security defense."

Regardless of language issues, the Foal Eagle exercise strengthened bonds with an important U. S. ally.

"This is the force that we're going to go to combat with should it become necessary," said Killeen. "The opportunity to learn how they do business and for them to learn how we do business has been invaluable."

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